

Describing proficiency in adult L2 Scottish Gaelic: Current findings and future directions

Nicola Carty

University of Glasgow

nicola.carty@glasgow.ac.uk

1st Whole Action Conference of the
European Network on New Speakers in a
Multilingual Europe
November 20th, 2014



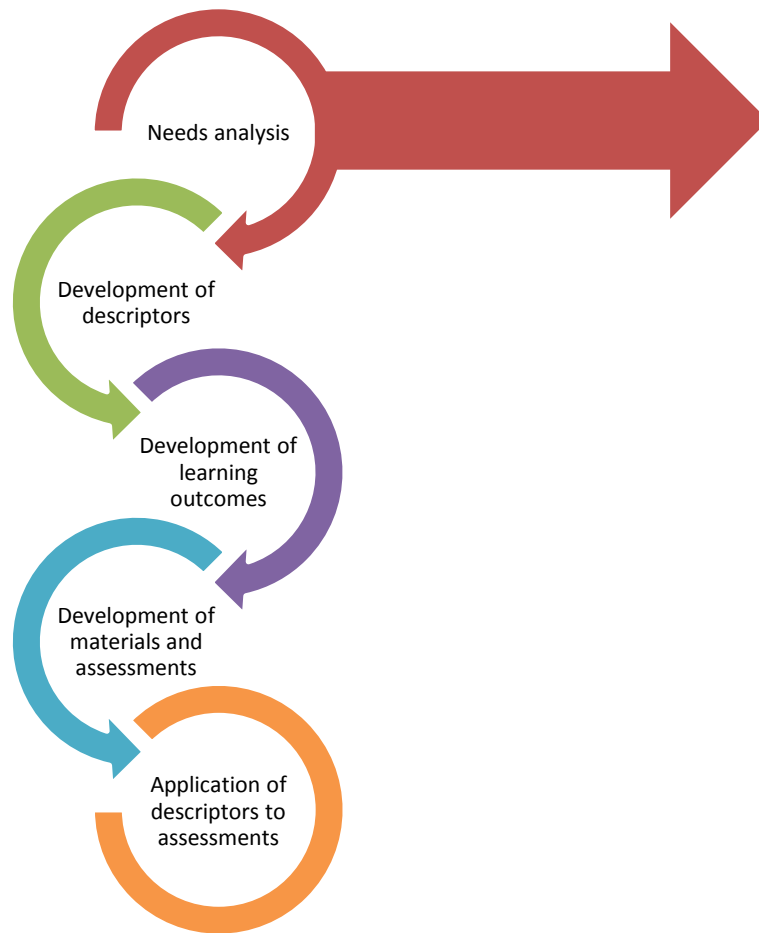
Oilthigh
Ghlaschu



Gaelic adult language education policy

- Issues highlighted (e.g. Comunn na Gàidhlig & Comunn Luchd Ionnsachaidh 1992; MacCaluim 2007; McLeod et al. 2010; Milligan et al. 2011):
 - Curriculum policy
 - Methods and materials policy
 - Personnel policy

Pedagogic cycles in second language learning



How is Gaelic L2
proficiency perceived?

How can it be measured?

The current study

- A data-driven approach to the measurement of proficiency in L2 Gaelic
- Design:
 - Semi-structured interview
 - Narrative task
 - 16 adult learners of Gaelic
 - 9 women, 7 men
 - Different learning backgrounds
 - Different amounts of exposure to Gaelic

Communicative adequacy

- Speaker's ability to use formal language knowledge and language processing skills to communicate (Kuiken et al. 2010, Révész et al. 2013)
- 5 non-professional raters
 - 5 minute sample of the interview
 - Entire narrative
- Provided with a communicative adequacy scale developed for the task
 - Modelled on CEFR, Lotti (2007), Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge, WiSP (e.g. de Jong et al. (2012)), ALTE can-do statements, Munro et al. (2012), IELTS, ACTFL
- Asked to explain ratings
- Final score for communicative adequacy based on an average of raters' scores

Results: Communicative adequacy

- High inter-rater reliability for both tasks:
 - Interview: ($\alpha = .961$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = .921 - .985)
 - Narrative: ($\alpha = .949$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = .892 - .980)
- Raters nonetheless have their own opinions...

Relationship between descriptors and comments by...	Jaccard's coefficient
Richard (interview)	0.343
Clem (interview)	0.314
Clem (narrative)	0.312
Andrew (interview)	0.310
Richard (narrative)	0.306
Andrew (narrative)	0.293
Liam (interview)	0.263
Liam (narrative)	0.208
Ben (interview)	0.183

Results: Communicative Adequacy

Participant	Stronger ability to express self	Weaker ability to express self
Anne		
Amanda		
Cecily		
Chloe		
Dawn		
Danielle		
Gloria		Richard
Jenny		
Joyce		Richard
Kathy	Richard	Andrew
Lily	Richard	
Maggie		
Nikki		
Olivia	Richard	
Simone	Richard	
Tara	Richard	

Participant	More competent	More complex information	Simpler information	Less comprehensible	More comprehensible	Less confident	More confident
Anne			Richard	Andrew		Liam	
Amanda		Clem					Andrew
Cecily							
Chloe				Andrew			Liam, Andrew, Clem
Dawn					Andrew	Liam, Clem	Andrew
Danielle		Clem					Liam, Andrew
Gloria				Andrew		Andrew	
Jenny			Liam, Richard	Andrew	Clem		Liam, Andrew
Joyce			Andrew		Andrew	Clem	Andrew, Richard
Kathy			Andrew	Andrew		Clem	
Lily					Andrew		Andrew
Maggie				Andrew, Richard			Andrew
Nikki				Andrew, Clem		Clem	
Olivia	Andrew				Andrew		Liam, Clem
Simone				Andrew, Richard	Andrew	Clem	Andrew
Tara				Andrew		Clem	

Linguistic proficiency

- 8 components of proficiency, in 3 dimensions:
 - Complexity
 - Accuracy
 - Fluency
- **Complexity**
 - Subordination ratio
 - Lexical diversity – D
 - Mean Length of Clause

Linguistic proficiency

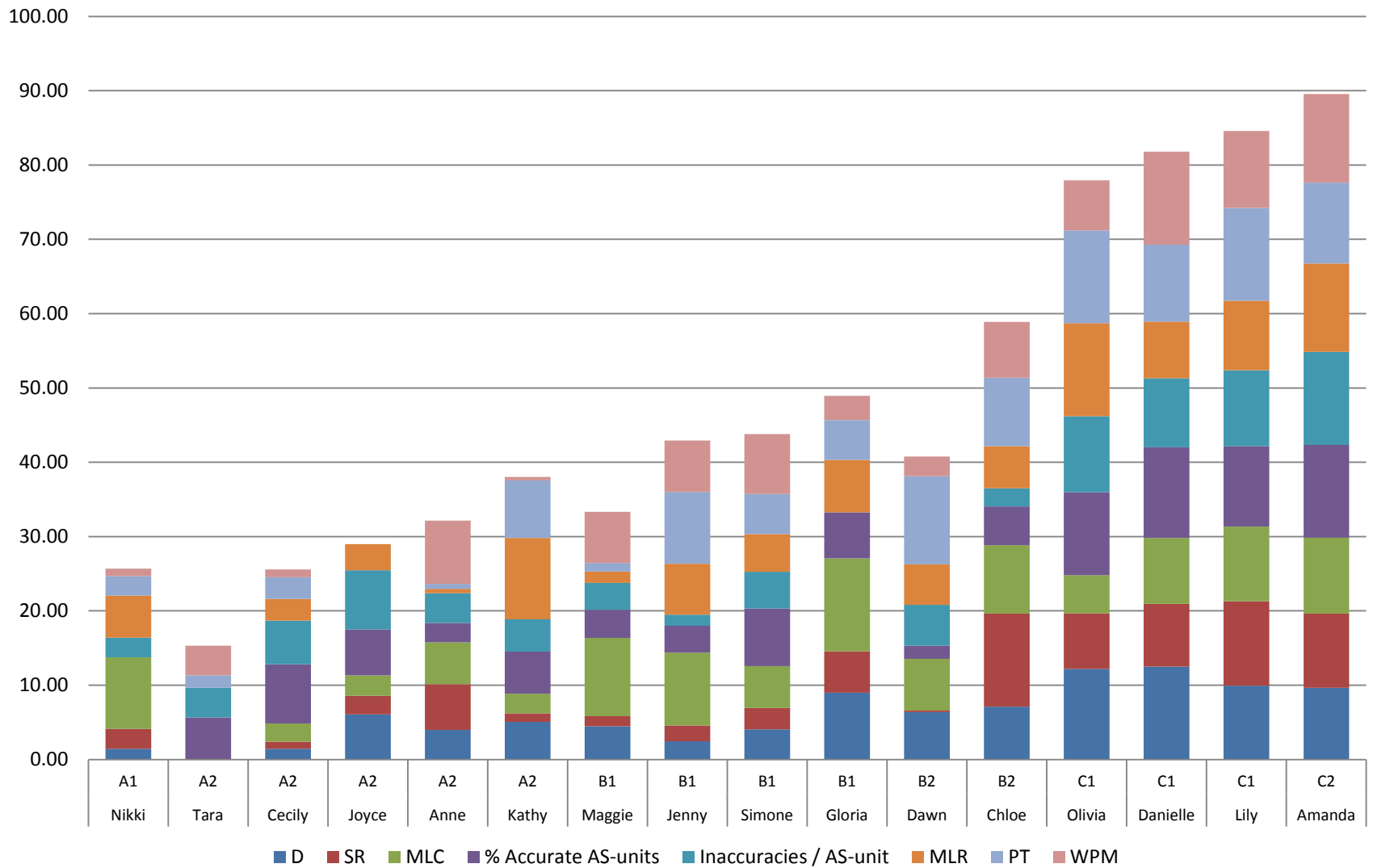
- **Accuracy**

- Average number of errors per AS-unit
- Percentage of error-free AS-units

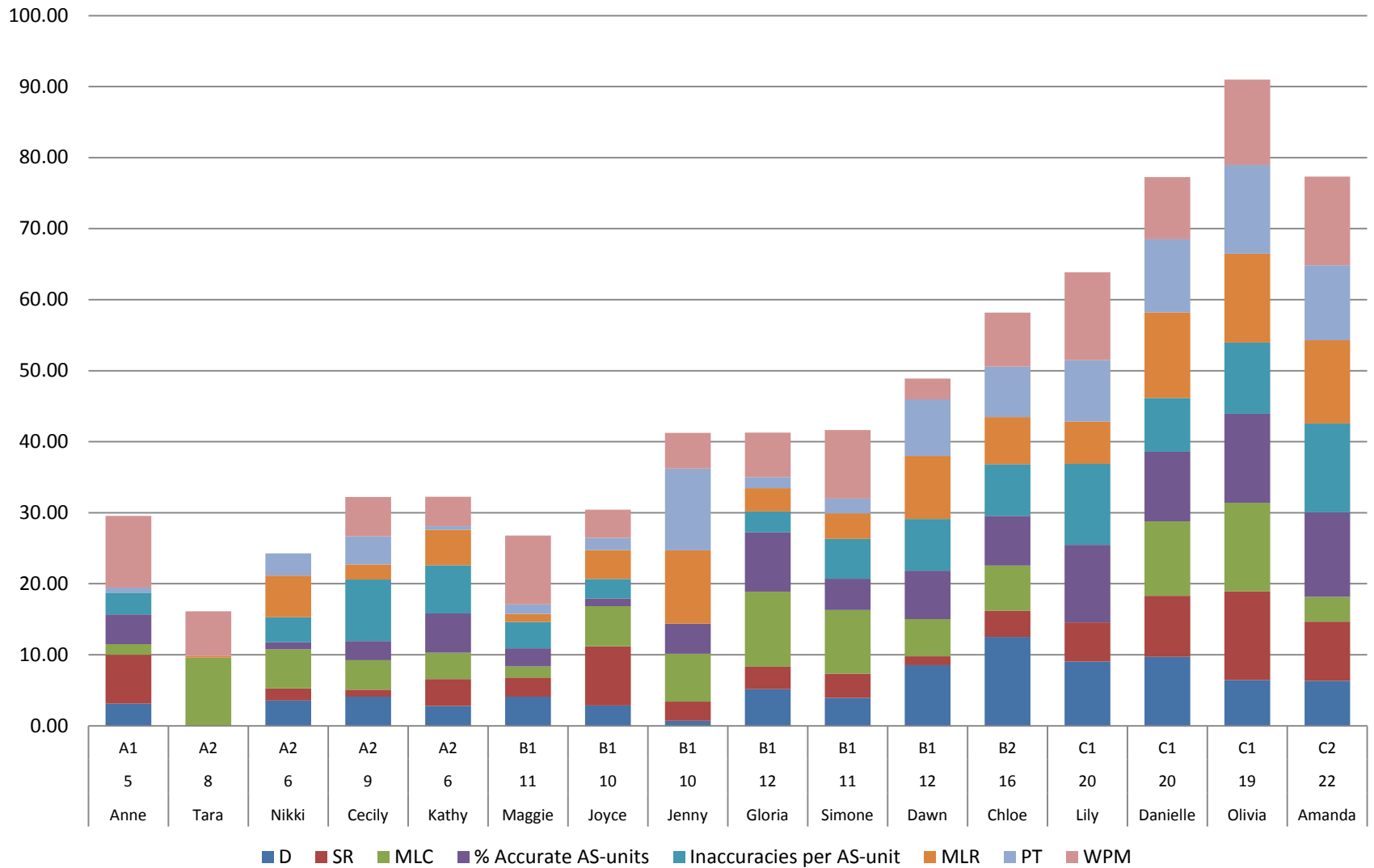
- **Fluency**

- Phonation Time Ratio
- Mean Length of Run
- Pruned average number of Words per Minute

Results: Interview



Results: Narrative



Results

- *Tendency* towards a relationship between communicative adequacy and lower CAF scores
 - Iwashita et al. (2008: 41)
 - “impact [of differences in scores] on the overall level assigned to the test taker was not particularly strong”
- *Tendency* towards more balanced control over all linguistic domains at higher levels
 - Constraints on attentional capacity cause fewer problems (Skehan 1998)

Discussion

- The rating scale is useful, but distorts details
 - Does that matter?
 - Yes** – It can't tell us that much about *individuals*
 - No** – Practically, mean values can be useful, so long as raters are aware that these are averages
 - Yes** – Theoretically, it doesn't give insight into individual raters' thought processes (Orr 2002)
 - No** – Practically, it works... (Iwashita et al. 2008)

Discussion

- Multiple-trait scale? (e.g. Hirai & Koizumi 2013: 421)

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>
Communicative Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Coherent and elaborate story retell with sufficient opinions, with few hesitations and self-corrections.4. Coherent and elaborate story retell with sufficient opinions, but with some hesitations and self-corrections.3. Few elaborations of the story or not sufficient opinions with no long awkward pauses.2. Lack of coherency or with some long awkward pauses.1. Little fluency.
Grammar & Vocabulary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. A variety of sentence patterns with almost no grammatical or lexical errors.4. A few grammatical and lexical errors but most verbs marked for correct tense and aspect.3. Some verbs marked for incorrect tense and aspect, but correct use of pronouns and prepositional phrases.2. Some prominent grammatical and lexical errors, or few use of pronouns or prepositional phrases.1. Frequent grammatical and lexical errors or only a few sentences.
Pronunciation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Accurate pronunciation with correct stress and natural intonation.4. Almost no prominent prosodic errors, but with some inaccurate pronunciation, incorrect stress, or unnatural intonation.3. Some prosodic errors and with no strong accent.2. Some prosodic errors and with a strong accent.1. Frequent prosodic errors.

Future research

- Comasan Labhairt ann an Gàidhlig (CLAG) / Gaelic Proficiency (GAP)
 - 3 years
 - Supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Funding Council
 - Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen
- Framework for adult proficiency in spoken L2 Gaelic
 - 3 years
 - 120 L2 users, 20 L1 users
 - Allows for inferential stats

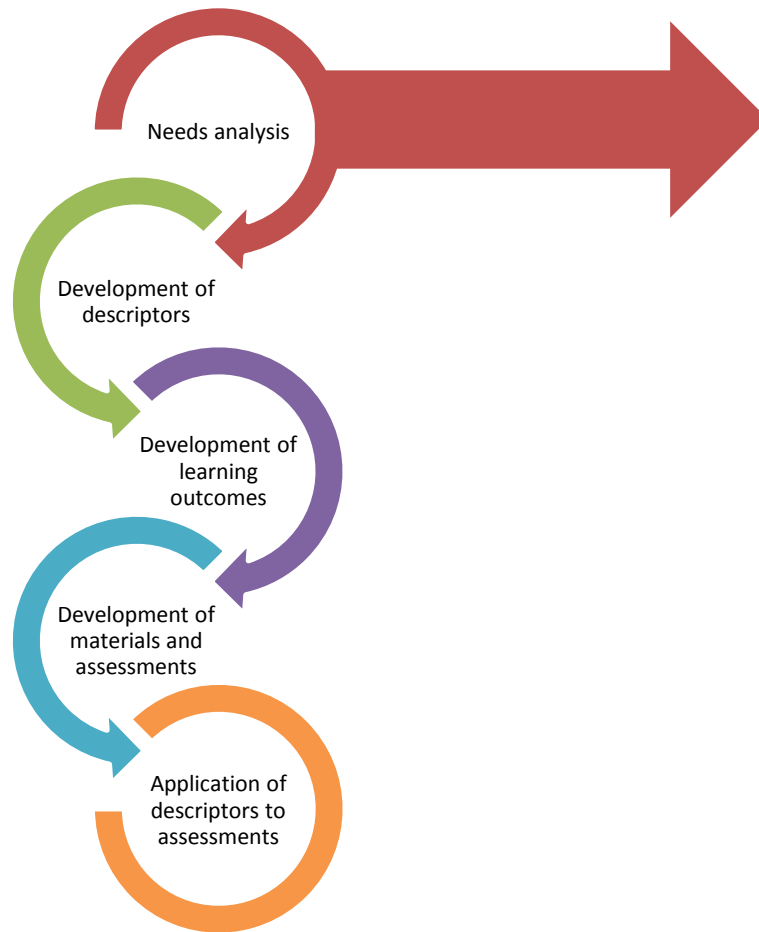
Future research

- Examining oral production:
 - Informal conversation
 - Narrative
 - Questions and answers
 - Elicited imitation
- Data to be coded for
 - CAF
 - Obligatory occasion analysis
- Rated by L1 users
- Scales for learners, teachers, and testers

Conclusions

- Adult Gaelic L2 proficiency is messy...
- ...but measurable
 - Multiple trait scales
 - Clear directions to raters
- Clear, data-driven needs analysis can help resolve some of the issues identified in Gaelic LEP

Conclusions



How is Gaelic L2
proficiency perceived?

How can it be measured?

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